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ABSTRACT

In 1995, the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System (UW) established a goal of decreased attempted credits-to-degree from 145 to 140 by the 2000-2001 school year with the objective of increased institutional efficiency. This research brief draws on UW data to look at the experience of UW institutions in achieving this objective and the relationship of credits-to-degree to time-to-degree and graduation rates. Average credits-to-degree have decreased since the 1993-1994 academic year. From the 1993-1994 to 2000-2001 school years, the UW System average number of credits-to-degree decreased from 145 to 137, exceeding the system goal. All institutions in the system reduced their average credits-to degree, and 10 of 13 institutions met their individual goals. The mean credits-to-degree was 137, but the median was 134. This difference illustrates that the few graduates who attempt an exceptionally large number of credits skew the average. Eighty percent of degree programs require 120 credits, but 1 in 5 requires more. Most such programs are in education, allied health, and engineering programs where degree requirements are established to meet professional and occupational licensure expectations. As long as policies and interventions designed to support increasing graduate rates are compatible with decreasing time-to-degree, credits-to-degree should continue to decrease. Nine appendixes contain detailed tables of credit information. (Contains 23 tables.) (SLD)

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Institutional Efficiency and Student Success: The Relationship Between Credits-to-Degree, Time-to-Degree and Graduation Rates

The University of Wisconsin System

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UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM

Occasional Research Brief

Volume 02, No. 1: May 2002

Institutional Efficiency and Student Success: The Relationship Between Credits-to-Degree, Time-to-Degree and Graduation Rates

Executive Summary

The University of Wisconsin System has long-standing commitments to increase efficiency, to provide an academic environment that offers students the opportunity to achieve their educational objectives, and to ensure both the quality of graduates and the educational environment. In 1995, the Board of Regents established a goal of decreasing attempted credits-to-degree from 145 to 140 by 2000-01 with the objective of increased institutional efficiency. This research brief looks at the experience of UW institutions in achieving this objective and the relationship of credits-to-degree to time-to-degree and graduation rates.

Key Findings:

Average credits-to-degree have decreased since 1993-94.

- Between 1993-94 and 2000-01, the UW System average number of credits-to-degree decreased from 145 to 137. This exceeds the UW System goal of reducing the average to 140.
- All institutions reduced their average credits-to-degree. Ten of thirteen institutions met their individual goals.
- While the mean credits-to-degree for 2000-01 graduates was 137, the median credits-to-degree was 134. This difference illustrates that the few graduates who attempt an exceptionally large number of credits skew the average giving the appearance that the typical graduate is attempting a larger number of credits.
- While 80 percent of degree programs require 120 credits, one in five requires more. Most of the programs requiring the higher number of credits to graduate are in education, allied health, and engineering--programs where degree requirements are established to meet professional and occupational licensure expectations.
- Institutions with a large number of offerings in the higher credit programs and/or a large number of graduates in these fields tend to have higher average credits-to-degree.

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Executive Summary – continued

Time-to-degree has decreased along with the credits-to-degree.

- The time it took graduating students to finish their degrees decreased between 1993-94 and 2000-01. The proportion of graduates completing their degrees in four years increased from 21 percent to 33 percent over this period.
- The median number of credits attempted decreases as time-to-degree decreases. Consequently, during the credits-to-degree reduction initiative, time-to-degree decreased along with credits-to-degree.
- Differences by institution in credits-to-degree result from differences in the proportion of graduates finishing in four, five, six and more than six years.
- While some students take longer than six years to graduate, their behavior and characteristics differ from those who graduate in less than six years.

During the period of time when credits-to-degree and time-to-degree decreased, four-year graduation rates increased.

- Since 1989, four-year graduation rates have increased and the proportion of students taking more than four-years to graduate has actually decreased.
- The decline in credits-to-degree by year of graduation accompanied by an increase in the four-year graduation rate had an additional impact on reducing credits-to-degree.
- Over sixty percent of students who matriculated in 1995 as full-time students graduated within six years from a UW institution; an increase of 11 percentage points since the late 1970s. This is the highest six-year graduation rate ever.
- UW System graduation and retention rates are higher than national rates by as much as five percentage points.
- The largest gain in the graduation rate increase over the last 20 years is attributed to those students graduating five years after matriculation.

Between 1993 and 2001, UW institutions implemented policies that decreased credits-to-degree. During this period, time-to-degree also decreased. These policies, which decreased credits-to-degree, were also consistent with lowering time-to-degree. Over the same time period, overall six-year graduation rates remained stable although there was a shift from six-year graduates to more four-year graduates. Starting in 1999, six-year graduation rate targets were established in an effort to increase retention and graduation rates. As long as policies and interventions designed to support increasing graduation rates are compatible with decreasing time-to-degree, credits-to-degree should continue to decrease.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, much attention has been paid to the cost of higher education, increased demand for access, the increasing importance of a college degree, and providing quality graduates for an increasingly knowledge-based society. In addition, the systemwide goals of maintaining a high service rate, increasing service to non-traditional students, and contributing to targeted economic development efforts, compel UW institutions to operate efficiently and maximize student success.

Maximizing both institutional efficiency and student effectiveness, within the parameters of program array and mission, allows UW institutions to serve as many students as possible, increase the rates at which students succeed, provide a high quality education and produce quality graduates. Decreasing the proportion of students who start college but do not finish maximizes the proportion of credits resulting in degrees. In this way, student effectiveness directly feeds institutional efficiency.

Measures such as retention and graduation rates, credits-to-degree and time-to-degree have all been used to gauge institutional efficiency and student success. Outcome goals and targets for these measures have been developed independently in the past. This paper focuses on the interrelatedness of these measures. Particular attention is paid to the results of UW institutional efforts to reduce credits-to-degree. The concomitant effects of this reduction on time-to-degree and graduation rates are also explored.

CREDITS-TO-DEGREE

Credits-to-degree is one gauge of institutional efficiency since it is a measure of resource allocation and utilization. When students attempt more credits than required for degree completion, they use institutional resources that could be used to serve additional students. This section examines the results of UW institutional initiatives to reduce credits-to-degree and the relationship between institutional credits-to-degree and program array.

The Credits-To-Degree Reduction Initiative

Concerned by the number of graduates with excess credits, course availability problems, rising time to graduation, and high course drop rates, the Board of Regents, in the mid 1990s, instructed UW institutions to increase efficiency by reducing the number of attempted credits-to-degree. This initiative to reduce credits-to-degree was an attempt to improve institutional efficiency and resource allocation.

The metric chosen to assess credits-to-degree was the number of credits that graduating students were attempting as of the tenth day of the semester. The use of this metric recognizes that although some students drop courses after registration they still use institutional resources. The number of credits students accumulate is influenced by a number of intertwined factors. The most obvious factor is the minimum number of credits, most commonly 120, needed for graduation. Other factors include academic preparation, advanced standing and advanced placement credits, academic motivation and direction, course availability and the number of repeated and dropped courses in addition to degree, professional and accreditation requirements.

Each UW institution sought to improve efficiency by reducing credits-to-degree in ways consistent with its own mission and student population. Goals varied by institution, ranging from reductions of one to twelve credits (Table 1). In addition to goal differences, there were differences in how institutions sought to achieve these goals. All institutions reviewed their degree requirements and reduced them where appropriate. Some institutions expanded pro-active advising and reviewed policies on acceptance of transfer credit, course repeats, acceptance of advance standing credits, and course drop issues. Many also reviewed their general education requirements and improved course availability.

Between 1993-94 and 2000-01, all UW institutions reduced average (mean) credits-to-degree. Ten of thirteen institutions met their individual goals. For the 2000-01 bachelors degree recipients, average credits-to-degree ranged from 127 at UW-Madison to 148 at UW-Platteville. Overall, UW System average credits-to-degree decreased from 145 to 137. The UW System met its goal of reducing credits-to-degree by 1998-99 and has continued this reduction each year since.

Table 1
University of Wisconsin System
Mean Credits to Degree by Institution for Bachelors Degree Recipients

	93-94	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	Goal
Eau Claire	147	146	145	144	143	142	141	140	140
Green Bay	139	141	138	140	138	138	134	135	138
La Crosse	154	153	152	150	149	145	143	143	148
Madison	136	135	134	132	131	130	128	127	135
Milwaukee	148	150	151	152	149	148	147	144	145
Oshkosh	152	151	153	151	152	148	148	146	144
Parkside	146	145	146	145	141	140	142	140	139
Platteville	153	153	152	152	150	150	150	148	148
River Falls	149	145	143	142	140	139	138	136	140
Stevens Point	149	149	147	145	144	143	141	141	142
Stout	152	152	149	149	148	146	144	144	145
Superior	153	151	145	145	142	142	142	140	141
Whitewater	143	142	142	140	141	141	139	140	135
Overall	145	145	144	143	142	140	139	137	140

The credits-to-degree reduction initiative uses mean (arithmetic average) credits as its measurement. Employing a mean as a measure of central tendency is most useful when cases are evenly distributed. Since the minimum number of credits attempted is fixed around 120, the use of mean credits exaggerates the impact of the few students who attempt a high number of credits. The use of the median (the credit level at which 50 percent of graduates are above and 50 percent are below) as a measure of central tendency is more reflective of typical student behavior since the bias created by the few students with high credits is diminished. Table 2 shows the difference between mean and median credits. While the mean credits-to-degree for 2000-01 graduates was 137, the median was 134. This difference illustrates that the few graduates who attempt an exceptionally large number of credits skew the average giving the appearance that the typical graduate is attempting a larger number of credits (Appendices B and C).

Table 2
University of Wisconsin System
Measures of Credits-to-Degree For Bachelors Degree Recipients

	1993-94	2000-01
Mean	145	137
Median	141	134

While 80 percent of degree programs require 120 credits, one in five requires more. A UW degree provides students with a certain depth of discipline-specific knowledge as well as a minimum level of breadth in other disciplines. In addition to this breadth and depth, many degree programs require courses that fulfill professional and occupational requirements. Without compromising the quality and purpose of a UW bachelors degree, fulfilling both intents often results in degree programs requiring more than 120 credits. Degree programs in engineering, education, allied health, and certain business fields often require more than 120 credits for graduation. Reducing degree credits below a certain threshold would almost certainly affect quality and would likely compromise accreditation and licensure requirements for these programs.

Program Array

Institutional mission determines program array – the degree program options available to students. The program array at each institution and the distribution of graduates among the degree program offerings provides some context for understanding institutional variance in credits-to-degree. Institutions with a large number of offerings in the higher credit programs and/or a large number of graduates in these fields tend to have higher average credits-to-degree than other institutions. For example, UW-Platteville's average credits-to-degree was 148. Despite the fact that 82 percent of degree programs can be completed with 120 credits, only half (51%) of UW-Platteville's graduates were in these programs (Table 3). In addition, ten percent of UW-Platteville's degree programs require between 131 and 140 credits, yet 30 percent of its graduates were in these degree programs. By contrast, UW-Green Bay's average credits-to-degree was 135. Almost all (97%) of its degree programs require 120 credits and almost all (97%) of its graduates are in these programs. Appendix A shows the degree programs at each institution that require more than 130 credits.

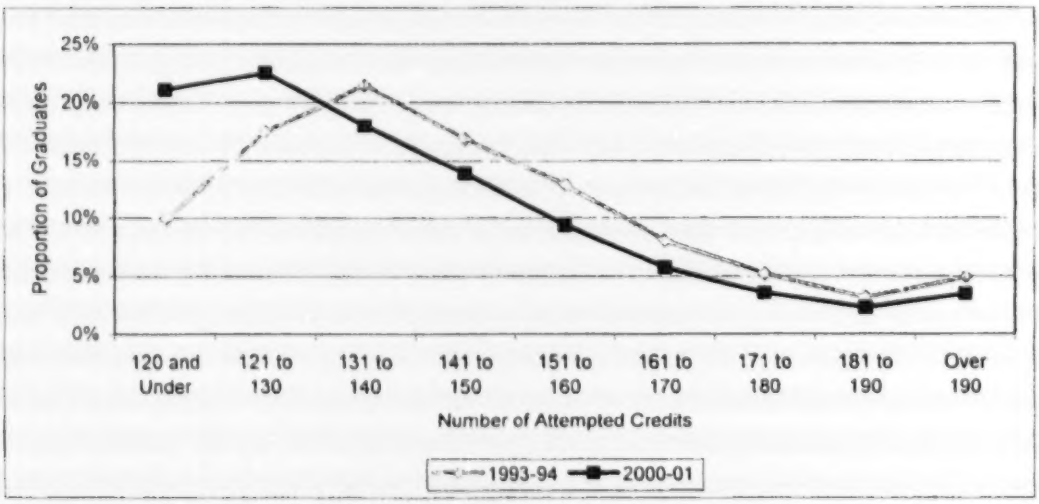
Table 3
University of Wisconsin System
Bachelors Degree Credit Requirements
For the 2000-01 Academic Year

	120		121-130		131-140		141-150		151-160		161 and Over	
	Prog.	Grads*	Prog.	Grads*	Prog.	Grads*	Prog.	Grads*	Prog.	Grads*	Prog.	Grads*
Eau Claire	92%	93%	7%	2%	1%	5%						
Green Bay	97%	97%					3%	3%				
La Crosse	76%	79%	3%	2%	9%	15%	4%	3%	3%	2%	1%	0%
Madison	74%	76%	23%	21%	2%	3%			1%	0%		
Milwaukee	79%	76%	20%	23%	1%	1%						
Oshkosh	77%	69%	2%	8%	1%	0%	2%	13%	9%	7%	9%	2%
Parkside	100%	100%										
Platteville	82%	51%	4%	17%	10%	30%	3%	2%				
River Falls	87%	84%	1%	2%	12%	14%						
Stevens Point	71%	72%	9%	11%	11%	14%	7%	3%	1%	0%		
Stout			93%	93%	7%	7%						
Superior	79%	81%	4%	0%	11%	19%	6%	0%				
Whitewater	100%	100%										
Overall	80%	76%	11%	16%	4%	6%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%

*Indicates proportion of graduates in those degree programs.

The achievement of the goals of the credits-to-degree reduction initiative is demonstrated by the distribution of graduates between 1993-94 and 2000-01 (Chart 1). A higher proportion of bachelors degree recipients are graduating with 130 or fewer credits while smaller proportions graduate with more than 130 credits. Twenty-one percent (21%) of 2000-01 graduates graduated with 120 or fewer credits compared to 10% of 1993-94 graduates (Appendices B and C).

Chart 1
University of Wisconsin System
Distribution of Bachelors Degree Recipients by Attempted Credit Ranges
Comparison of 1993-94 to 2000-01



While students graduating in degree programs with requirements over 120 credits will likely graduate with more credits than other graduates, they do not appear more likely to exceed degree requirements than other graduates (Table 4). Overall, 24 percent of graduates did not attempt more credits than required. Half of the graduates in 120-credit degree programs graduate with 130 or fewer credits.

Table 4
University of Wisconsin System
Relationship of Degree Program Requirements to Attempted Credits
For Bachelors Degree Recipients in 2000-01

Required Credits	Number of Attempted Credits Over Degree Program Requirements									
	0	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	Over 70	Total
120	25%	25%	18%	12%	8%	5%	3%	2%	3%	12,552
121-130	20%	23%	19%	15%	9%	5%	3%	2%	3%	2,615
131-140	17%	22%	22%	16%	10%	6%	3%	2%	3%	1,002
141-150	16%	22%	19%	16%	14%	6%	2%	2%	2%	256
Over 150	27%	20%	13%	19%	11%	3%	1%	2%	4%	135
Overall	24%	24%	18%	13%	8%	5%	3%	2%	3%	16,560

TIME-TO-DEGREE FOR GRADUATING STUDENTS

The length of time bachelors degree recipients take to complete their degrees is one measure of student effectiveness. Getting students to graduate sooner, in addition to encouraging them to graduate with fewer credits, frees up resources and allows UW institutions to serve more students. This section looks at aspects of time-to-degree over the same time period as the credits-to-degree reduction initiative.

Time-to-degree can be measured in several ways, one of which is simply calculating the length of time (in years) it took bachelors degree recipients to graduate. Other measures of time-to-degree include the number of fall and spring semesters of enrollment, the number of summer semesters enrolled and the number of stop-outs (falls and springs not enrolled). For example, a student who started in fall 1990, graduated in spring 2000, and enrolled for eight semesters between these years would have ten "years to graduation" and eight semesters enrolled.

The time it takes graduates to finish their degrees, like credits-to-degree, is influenced by many factors. Some factors such as admission and degree program requirements, course availability, course sequencing and alignment between program and occupational requirements are primarily within an institution's control. Other factors such as high school academic preparation, academic goal orientation and direction, and use of tools such as advising and degree-audits are primarily within an individual student's control. Finally, students who do not have the financial resources to attend college full-time or who have other commitments will take longer to graduate.

For 1993-94 graduates, 21 percent graduated within four years (Table 5). By the 2000-01 graduating class, this proportion had increased 12 percentage points to 33 percent. A similar increase was also seen in the proportion of graduates finishing within five years. In 1993-94, two-thirds of the graduates finished within five years. By 2000-01, this proportion had increased to three-quarters of the graduates. Of the bachelors degree recipients in a given year, almost nine of ten graduate within six years of initial matriculation.

Table 5
University of Wisconsin System
Calendar and Semester Time-to-Degree Measures
For Bachelors Degree Recipients

	Years to Graduation				
	4	5	6	More than 6	Total
1993-94 Graduates	21%	45%	18%	16%	16,277
Cumulative Percent	21%	66%	84%	100%	
Semesters	7.8	9.5	11.1	13.2	10.0
Part-Time Semesters	0.1	0.4	0.9	2.8	0.4
Summers	1.1	1.1	1.4	2.1	1.3
Stop Outs	0.1	0.1	0.4	5.7	1.1
2000-01 Graduates	33%	42%	12%	13%	16,560
Cumulative Percent	33%	75%	87%	100%	
Semesters	7.9	9.5	11.0	13.1	9.6
Part-Time Semesters	0.1	0.4	0.8	2.8	0.3
Summers	0.9	1.1	1.4	2.0	1.2
Stop Outs	0.1	0.1	0.5	7.4	1.1

Examining the relationship between the time to graduation in years and the number of fall/spring semester enrollments shows that, not surprisingly, the number of fall and spring semesters enrolled increases as calendar time increases. Graduates who graduated in four years enrolled for approximately eight fall/spring semesters and graduates who graduated in five years enrolled for approximately ten fall/spring semesters. The number of enrolled fall and spring semesters is closely related to the years to graduation (calendar time).

Students who took more than six years to graduate differ substantially from students who took less time. Students taking more than six years to graduate enrolled for more fall and spring semesters and more part-time semesters than students who took less time. In addition, graduates who took longer than six years to graduate enrolled more in summer sessions and had more "stop-out" semesters (i.e. not enrolled). Although graduates taking longer than six years to graduate spread their education, on average, over a period that spanned 20 semesters, they were actually enrolled for only 13 of those semesters.

There are only slight differences between institutions in the average number of fall/spring semesters, summer semesters, and stop outs for 2000-01 graduates (Appendix D). However, large institutional differences exist in the proportion of bachelors degree recipients graduating in four, five, six and more than six years. The proportion of bachelors degree recipients graduating within four years of matriculation ranges from 47 percent at UW-Madison to 21 percent at UW-Milwaukee. The proportion of bachelors degree recipients taking more than six years to graduate ranges from 31 percent at UW-Parkside to six percent at UW-La Crosse.

TIME-TO-DEGREE AND CREDITS-TO-DEGREE

In this section, credits-to-degree and time-to-degree are examined concurrently. The proportion of students graduating within specified time periods and their accumulated credits are both shown for the period of the credits-to-degree reduction initiative.

Examining credits-to-degree and time-to-degree measures together shows that the median number of credits attempted increases as time increases (Table 6). For example, 2000-01 graduates who graduated in four years attempted 121 credits, five-year graduates attempted 138 credits, six-year graduates attempted 157 credits and graduates who took more than six years to graduate attempted 164 credits. This relationship held for both 1993-94 and 2000-01 graduates.

Between 1993-94 and 2000-01, median credits-to-degree were reduced from 141 to 134. Median credits within each "years to graduation" group declined slightly. Also, the proportion of graduates finishing in four years increased substantially. Thus, the credits-to-degree reduction initiative resulted in a reduction in both the number of attempted credits and in time-to-graduation.

Table 6
University of Wisconsin System
Credits-to-Degree by Years to Graduation
For Bachelors Degree Recipients

	Years to Graduation				
	4	5	6	More than 6	Total
1993-94 Graduates	21%	45%	18%	16%	16,277
Cumulative Percent	21%	66%	84%	100%	
Median Credits	124	140	158	168	141
2000-01 Graduates	33%	42%	12%	13%	16,560
Cumulative Percent	33%	75%	87%	100%	
Median Credits	121	138	157	164	134

There is wide variance by institution in time-to-degree and credits-to-degree reflecting differences in institutional mission, program array and the composition of the student population. Each institution has a unique combination of these factors. Understanding this combination is critical to understanding the impact of initiatives to improve retention and graduation rates and to reducing credits and time-to-degree. Policies and initiatives designed to target one factor will have varying levels of impact depending on the institution.

The overall trend of median number of credits attempted increasing as time increases holds true for individual UW institutions (Table 7). Across UW institutions, bachelors degree recipients who graduate within four years take approximately the same number of credits. Median credits for four-year graduates range from 117 at UW-Madison to 128 at UW-Stout. This translates to a difference of less than three credits per year between UW institutions. Median credits of bachelors degree recipients who took 5 years to graduate range from 133 at UW-Madison to 145 at UW-La Crosse. This also translates to a difference of under three credits per year between UW institutions. Credits-to-degree for graduates taking the same time to graduate varies little between institutions. Therefore, the large differences in the proportion of students graduating in four, five, six, or more than six years has a major influence on credits-to-degree.

Table 7
University of Wisconsin System
Credits-to-Degree by Years to Graduation
For Bachelors Degree Recipients in 2000-01

		Years to Graduation				
		4	5	6	More than 6	Total
Eau Claire	Graduates	26%	51%	13%	10%	1,378
	Median Credits	123	139	161	171	137
Green Bay	Graduates	26%	45%	12%	17%	649
	Median Credits	121	134	152	148	132
La Crosse	Graduates	34%	46%	14%	6%	1,258
	Median Credits	124	145	170	177	140
Madison	Graduates	47%	38%	8%	7%	5,061
	Median Credits	117	133	149	152	125
Milwaukee	Graduates	21%	34%	16%	28%	1,848
	Median Credits	122	135	153	166	138
Oshkosh	Graduates	24%	41%	18%	17%	1,137
	Median Credits	123	140	164	169	141
Parkside	Graduates	25%	32%	12%	31%	364
	Median Credits	124	138	150	152	136
Platteville	Graduates	22%	45%	20%	13%	688
	Median Credits	126	144	164	184	145
River Falls	Graduates	39%	43%	7%	10%	732
	Median Credits	122	141	155	157	133
Stevens Point	Graduates	25%	48%	14%	13%	1,199
	Median Credits	122	140	162	165	138
Stout	Graduates	24%	49%	13%	14%	782
	Median Credits	128	141	159	167	140
Superior	Graduates	27%	37%	13%	23%	142
	Median Credits	122	140	156	157	140
Whitewater	Graduates	30%	43%	15%	13%	1,322
	Median Credits	123	139	162	166	136
UW System	Graduates	33%	42%	12%	13%	16,560
	Median Credits	121	138	157	164	134

In addition to differences in admission requirements between institutions, which are reflected in the academic make-up of the new freshman class, there are differences in the degree of academic preparation prior to college. Almost half of UW-Madison's bachelors degree recipients in 2000-01 attempted seemingly fewer credits (117) than the minimum required. This is reflected in the fact that 30 percent of these graduates had attained sophomore status by their second semester. Accumulating credits prior to initial matriculation, through various combinations of advanced placement credits or retroactive credits, credits by examination, and credits taken during high school, allows students to graduate faster with fewer credits. UW-Green Bay and UW-Whitewater had the next highest proportion of 2000-01 graduates who attained sophomore status by their second semester. Just nine percent and seven percent of graduates at these institutions attained sophomore status by the second semester emphasizing the degree to which opportunities to earn college credits prior to matriculation are a large determinant of UW-Madison's lower median credits-to-degree and time-to-degree.

Student population differences that affect credits-to-degree and time-to-degree include the ability and propensity of students to attend full-time, students' goal orientation and their level of academic preparation. This level of academic preparation is affected by a combination of high school course availability, availability of college-level courses to high school students, and students' decisions whether or not to take advantage of these options.

Examining differences between students who take longer than six years to graduate and those who graduate in under six years shows that, in addition to the increased stop-out behavior (shown in Table 5), students who take more than six years to graduate are more likely to attend part-time. For 2000-01 graduates who took over six years to graduate, 27 percent of their fall/spring semesters were part-time compared to four percent of fall/spring semesters for the graduates who took less time (specific data not shown).

GRADUATION RATES

Graduation is the successful outcome of a postsecondary education reflecting both student achievement and institutional performance. Higher education organizations, state and federal agencies, and the media place significant emphasis on the rates at which postsecondary institutions graduate students. Public and private dollars are often tied to graduation rates as performance indicators and colleges and universities are held accountable for graduating their students in a timely and efficient manner.

Through improving retention, reducing time-to-degree and increasing graduation rates while maintaining quality, UW institutions can achieve greater efficiency, effectiveness, and contributions to society. Helping students meet the high expectations for their postsecondary education by improving persistence and degree completions benefits the students themselves, the institution, and society in both tangible and intangible ways. This section examines graduation and retention rates for entering new freshmen. Particular attention is paid to retention and graduation rates during the same time period as the credits-to-degree reduction initiative. Historical trends and future targets are also presented as context for understanding recent trends.

Historical Trends

Over the past twenty years, there has been a substantial increase in graduation rates in the UW System; more students are graduating in four years, more students are graduating in five years and more students are graduating in six years. The largest gain occurred for those students graduating five years after matriculation. Over sixty percent (60.5) of new freshmen that matriculated in 1995 graduated within six years from a UW institution (Table 8). This rate has increased by 11.3 percentage points since the late 1970s. This increase is distributed across four, five and six-year graduation rates. The four-year graduation rate has increased by 2.5 percentage points, the five-year graduation rate has increased by 7.9 percentage points and the six-year rate has increased by 2.5 percentage points (institutional graduation rates are provided in Appendices E and F). These graduation rate increases were achieved during a time period when the quality of the incoming class increased and there was an increase in the proportion of Wisconsin high school graduates served. This increase in quality was not at the expense of access nor was the increase in access at the expense of quality.

Table 8
University of Wisconsin System
Four, Five and Six-Year Graduation Rates
For New Freshmen who Graduated at Any UW Institution

Fall Cohort	4-Year	5-Year	6-Year	Cumulative
1977	21.2%	22.2%	5.8%	49.2%
1979	19.8%	23.8%	6.4%	50.0%
1981	18.9%	25.5%	7.0%	51.4%
1983	17.5%	27.4%	7.7%	52.6%
1985	16.8%	28.4%	8.4%	53.6%
1987	17.1%	30.4%	9.7%	57.2%
1989	17.0%	32.2%	10.7%	59.9%
1991	16.2%	30.4%	10.3%	56.9%
1993	19.7%	30.5%	9.3%	59.5%
1995	22.7%	29.5%	8.3%	60.5%
1996	23.4%	30.1%		
1997	23.7%			
Change since '77	+2.5	+7.9	+2.5	+11.3

Retention measures are of particular interest because improved persistence increases the pool of potential graduates and subsequent graduation rates. The greatest attrition from higher education institutions occurs during the first year. Students are less likely to drop out after their second or third year of study than they are during or after their first year. If a student is retained to the second year of study, the odds are far greater that the student will eventually graduate.

Four-out-of-five (78.8 percent) fall 2000 new freshmen were retained to the second year at the UW institution at which they originally matriculated (Table 9). Persistence to the second year has increased nearly ten percentage points (9.8) since the late 1970s. Persistence to the third and fourth years has increased at an even greater rate, 12.8 and 12.7 percentage points respectively. In other words, attrition after the first year has decreased.

Table 9
University of Wisconsin System
Second, Third, and Fourth Year Retention Rates
For New Freshmen Retained at the Same Institution

Fall Cohort	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year
1977	69.0%	54.0%	49.5%
1979	70.9%	56.3%	50.5%
1981	71.3%	58.0%	52.3%
1983	72.6%	58.6%	53.4%
1985	73.6%	60.3%	55.6%
1987	77.1%	64.3%	59.7%
1989	79.4%	68.4%	63.4%
1991	78.1%	65.0%	60.3%
1993	77.7%	65.0%	60.4%
1995	77.6%	65.5%	61.2%
1997	78.5%	66.7%	62.9%
1998	78.5%	66.6%	62.2%
1999	78.7%	66.8%	
2000	78.8%		
Change since '77	+9.8	+12.8	+12.7

Recent Trends

Examining entering new freshman cohorts, in addition to the graduating cohorts already shown, during the credits-to-degree reduction initiative also reflects the effect of policy changes. The graduating cohorts of 1993-94 and 2000-01 include the new freshmen who matriculated in 1989 and 1995. The cumulative four, five and six-year graduation rates for the 1995 new freshman cohort are the highest ever, slightly exceeding the previous peak achieved for the 1989 cohort. Comparison of these two cohorts indicates a 5.7 percentage point gain in the four-year graduation rate between the 1989 and 1995 cohorts. The five-year and six-year rates decreased between these two cohorts, 2.7 and 2.4 percentage points respectively, while the overall six-year graduation rate increased slightly from 59.9 to 60.5 percent (Table 10). This indicates a shift toward four-year graduation. This shift was previously illustrated for graduating cohorts in the credits-to-degree section (Tables 5 and 6).

Another indication of the shift from six-year graduates to four-year graduates can be seen by examining the proportion of six-year graduates by year of graduation. For these students there has been a ten percentage point increase in the proportion that graduate in four years and a corresponding decrease in the proportion that graduate in more than four years. This shift toward four-year graduates holds for eleven of the thirteen UW institutions (Appendix G). Yet another illustration of this shift to four-year graduates is the increase in the number of graduates. There was a 35 percent increase in the number of four-year graduates and decreases in the number of five and six-year graduates for a total increase of three percent in the number of graduates between 1989 and 1995. This rate of increase was greater than the rate of increase of full-time new freshmen during the same time period.

Table 10
University of Wisconsin System
Four, Five and Six-Year Graduation Rates
For New Freshmen who Graduated at Any UW Institution

	4-Year	5-Year	6-Year	Cumulative
1989 Cohort				
Grad Rate	17.0%	32.2%	10.7%	59.9%
Grad Proportion	28%	54%	18%	100%
Graduates	3,395	6,402	2,124	11,921
1995 Cohort				
Grad Rate	22.7%	29.5%	8.3%	60.5%
Grad Proportion	38%	49%	14%	100%
Graduates	4,593	5,954	1,677	12,224
Change				
Grad Rate	5.7	-2.7	-2.4	0.6
Grad Proportion	10	-5	-4	0
Graduates	35%	-7%	-21%	3%

As shown earlier, for the 1995 new freshman cohort, the UW System has slightly exceeded 1989's previous peak with 60 percent of new freshmen graduating within six years of matriculation. In addition, the four-year graduation rate has increased substantially. However, for these same two cohorts the second, third and fourth-year persistence rates have actually decreased (Table 11). This implies that UW institutions have become more successful in graduating the students who persisted beyond the first year.

Table 11
University of Wisconsin System
Second, Third and Fourth-Year Retention Rates
For New Freshmen Retained at UW Institution Where Started

	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year
1989 Cohort	79.4%	68.4%	63.4%
1995 Cohort	77.6%	65.5%	61.2%
Change	-1.8	-2.9	-2.2

Between the 1989 and 1995 cohorts, UW institutions have increased graduation rates despite a decrease in retention rates. For recent cohorts, subsequent to 1995, retention rates have increased, providing an even greater pool of potential graduates. This recent increase in second-year retention rates was realized at 10 of 13 UW institutions (Appendix H). UW institutions are committed to continuing to improve student success by both increasing persistence and increasing the effectiveness with the students retained.

Targets

Not only are the UW System's graduation rates at an all time high, the six-year graduation rate continues to be above the national average (Appendix I). Nonetheless, the UW System is committed to improving efficiency and effectiveness by increasing persistence and graduation rates. All state agencies, including the UW System, were required to submit performance indicators to the Wisconsin Department of Administration. The UW chose two of its performance indicators to be second-year retention rates and six-year graduation rates.

Each campus provided year-to-year targets through the fall 2004 new freshmen entering class for each of these two measures. UW institutions assessed their potential retention and graduation rate growth based on mission, historic student attrition rates, student characteristics, and student choice factors. Therefore, each institution's planned growth varied given that they were starting at different points and trying to achieve reasonable and responsible goals within their respective environments. The systemwide year-to-year targets were established from the combined campus goals. The overall retention goal is to increase second-year persistence to 82 percent by the fall 2004 new freshman class. UW institutions plan, through increased persistence and increased effectiveness with the students retained, to increase the six-year graduation rate to 64 percent for the entering 2004 new freshman class (Table 12). The UW System has achieved its retention and graduation targets for the first two years of the initiative progressing toward its 82 and 64 percent goals and upholding its responsibility to effectively graduate students in a timely and efficient manner.

Table 12
University of Wisconsin System
Second-Year Retention Targets at UW Institution Where Started
& Six-Year Graduation Targets from Any UW Institution
For New Freshmen

	Retention Rates	
Fall Cohort	Actual	Target
1999	78.7%	78.4%
2000	78.8%	78.9%
2001		79.5%
2002		80.3%
2003		81.1%
2004		82.0%

	Graduation Rates	
Fall Cohort	Actual	Target
1994	59.3%	59.0%
1995	60.5%	60.4%
1998		61.5%
2000		62.0%
2002		63.0%
2004		64.0%

GRADUATION RATES AND CREDITS-TO-DEGREE

This section combines six-year graduation rates, credits-to-degree and time-to-degree for two entering new freshman cohorts. One cohort entered and graduated prior to the credits-to-degree reduction initiative while the other cohort entered and graduated during the period of the reduction initiative. Although credits-to-degree is typically measured for graduating cohorts, the effects of policies and interventions to reduce credits-to-degree are also reflected in the graduation rates for entering students.

The credits attempted in the successful completion of a degree can vary widely by the amount of time to graduation. This was illustrated earlier for graduating cohorts (students who graduate during the same academic year regardless of when they matriculated) in the credits-to-degree section of this paper. When looking at a graduating class it is important to remember that the graduates in a given academic year could have matriculated as many as twenty-five years earlier.

In contrast, in this section, credits-to-degree are provided for the graduates from a given entry cohort. Degree attainment for these students is then used to compute four, five and six-year graduation rates. Parallel to the pattern illustrated with the graduating cohorts, there is a decline in credits-to-degree for entry cohorts. Four-year graduates had a reduction in attempted credits from 124 to 121, five-year graduates had a reduction from 140 to 138 credits and six-year graduates had a reduction from 160 to 159 (Table 13). Everything else being constant, this reduction alone would have been enough to decrease overall credits-to-degree.

The decline in credits-to-degree by year of graduation accompanied by an increase in the four-year graduation rate (offset by decreases in five and six-year graduation rates) had an additional impact on reducing credits-to-degree. If the desired increases in six-year graduation rates are achieved, accompanied by further progress in reducing time-to-degree, overall credits-to-degree will continue to decline.

Table 13
University of Wisconsin System
Credits-to-Degree and Graduation Rates
For New Freshmen

	4-year	5-year	6-year	Cumulative
1989 Cohort				
Grad Rate	17.0%	32.2%	10.7%	59.9%
Median Credits	124	140	160	137
1995 Cohort				
Grad Rate	22.7%	29.5%	8.3%	60.5%
Median Credits	121	138	159	132
Change				
Grad Rate	5.7	-2.7	-2.4	0.6
Median Credits	-3	-2	-1	-5

Long-Term Persisters

Although, four, five and six-year graduation rates are important measures of student success, not all students intend or are able to graduate within six years. In addition, students face a variety of demands during their post-secondary studies including work, family, financial, career choice and exploration that cause them to stop out of school or change from full-time to part-time enrollment.

The proportion of students retained to the seventh year of study is a measure of eventual graduation and student success. The number of students still enrolled seven years after matriculation approximates the additional students who will eventually obtain a postsecondary degree (i.e. complete their degree in more than six years). As described previously in this paper, the behavior and characteristics of these long-term graduates differ from that of bachelors degree recipients who took less time (Table 14). Differences between long-term graduates who exceed degree requirements by fewer than 30 credits and those that exceed degree requirements by more than 30 credits are also illustrated in Table 14.

While three out of four (74%) bachelors degree recipients in 2000-01 graduated within six years and with fewer than 30 credits over degree requirements, one in four did not. Those that did not either took longer to graduate and/or accumulated a significant number of credits over degree requirements. Based on their average age at entrance, graduates who took longer than six years to graduate often did not start college immediately after high school. One-third of the bachelors degree recipients who took longer than six years to graduate accumulated fewer than 30 credits over degree requirements. Although both groups of bachelors degree recipients who took longer than six years to graduate extended their education over a time period of approximately 20 semesters, those who accumulated fewer credits were actually enrolled for fewer semesters (i.e. had more stop-out semesters).

Table 14
Credits-to-Degree Relative to Requirements and Time-to-Degree
For Bachelors Degree Recipients in 2000-01

		Time-to-Degree			
		6 Years and Under		More than 6 Years	
Credits Over Requirements	Under 30	Number of Grads	12,199	Number of Grads	786
		% of Total	74%	% of Total	5%
		Median Credits	128	Median Credits	135
		Average Semesters	9.0	Average Semesters	11.0
		Average Stop-Out Semesters	0.1	Average Stop-Out Semesters	9.4
		Average Age at Entrance	18	Average Age at Entrance	22
		Average Age at Graduation	22	Average Age at Graduation	29
	30 and Over	Number of Grads	2,226	Number of Grads	1,349
		% of Total	13%	% of Total	8%
		Median Credits	161	Median Credits	180
		Average Semesters	11.0	Average Semesters	14.0
		Average Stop-Out Semesters	0.1	Average Stop-Out Semesters	6.2
		Average Age at Entrance	19	Average Age at Entrance	21
		Average Age at Graduation	23	Average Age at Graduation	28

Whether viewed from the perspective of an entry cohort of a graduating cohort, the behavior of students taking longer than six years to graduate is very different from the behavior of students taking less time to graduate. By providing access to students to continue their education beyond that of a more traditional course of study, UW institutions offer a service and opportunity to less traditional students. In evaluating institutional efficiency and effectiveness, the service provided to these students should be recognized as a valuable contribution in achieving a high-quality, well-educated workforce.

CONCLUSION

Over the past few years, UW institutions have reduced credits-to-degree for graduating students, surpassing the goals set by the Board of Regents initiative of the mid 1990s. Along with these reductions in credits-to-degree, UW institutions have experienced increasing proportions of bachelors degree recipients graduating within four and five years. This is not surprising since many of the institutional policy changes designed to decrease credits-to-degree were also supportive of decreasing time-to-degree. Policies such as reducing degree requirements, proactive advising, keeping drop rates low, encouraging advanced placement course-taking, and improving course availability were used successfully by UW institutions to decrease credits-to-degree. These policies tended to have a positive impact on decreasing time-to-degree since there is a positive relationship between credits-to-degree and time-to-degree.

Over the last twenty years, the proportion of new freshmen being retained and graduating within six years has increased. The 1995 new freshman cohort achieved the highest-ever UW System six-year graduation rate, surpassing the previous rate of 1989's new freshman cohort. In more recent years, overall six-year graduation rates for new freshmen have remained relatively constant; however, the proportion of students graduating in four years has increased and the proportion of those taking more than four years to graduate has decreased. Retention rates have also increased over the last twenty years thereby increasing the pool of potential graduates and contributing to institutional efficiency.

UW institutions have developed second-year retention and six-year graduation rate targets in an effort to further increase student success. In order to achieve these targets, UW institutions will need to institute policy changes and develop programs directed at retaining more students and graduating those students who are retained. To the extent that these policies and practices designed to achieve retention/graduation targets are consistent with decreasing time-to-degree, further reductions in credits-to-degree can be expected.

Appendix A
University of Wisconsin System
Bachelors Degree Credits Requirements in 2000-01
Programs with More than 130 Required Credits

EAU	Elementary Ed. (140)
GBY	Accounting (150)
LAC	French (132)
	German Studies (132)
	Spanish (132)
	English (133)
	Management (138)
	Elementary Ed. (140)
	Radiation Science/Therapy (143)
	Social Studies (145)
	Medical Laboratory Science (150)
	General Science (151)
	Occupational Therapy (158)
	Physicians Assistant (216)
MSN	Chemical Engineering (132)
	Naval Science (136)
	Elementary Ed. (137)
	Natural Science/Ed. (140)
	International Business (153)
	Italian/Ed. (160)
	Latin Am., Caribbean...Studies/Ed. (160)
	Portuguese/Ed. (160)
MIL	Kinesiology (131)
OSH	Music Therapy (133)
	Special Ed. (141)
	Elementary Ed. (145)
	Physics/Ed. (153)
	Geography/Ed. (154)
	Speech/Ed. (154)
	Social Science/Ed. (154)
	Natural Science/Ed. (155)
	History/Ed. (155)
	English/Ed. (158)
	Music Education (158)
	Fine Arts (160)
	Chemistry/Ed. (162)
	English as a Second Lang. (163)
	Mathematics/Ed. (163)
	German/Ed. (164)
	French/Ed. (164)
OSH	Earth Science/Ed. (164)
	Spanish/Ed. (164)
	Biology/Ed. (167)
	Physical Education (176)
PLT	Mechanical Engineering (131)
	Environmental Engineering (132)
	Elementary Education (132)
	Electrical Engineering (132)
	Civil Engineering (134)
	Agricultural Education (140)
	Physical Education (143)
RVF	Environmental Science (132)
	Elementary Education (132)
	Art Education (132)
	Music Education (135)
	Health and Human Performance (135)
	Social Studies/Ed. (140)
	Science/Ed. (140)
STP	Forestry (133 BS, 141 BA)
	Early Childhood Education (133)
	Wildlife Management (133 BS, 141 BA)
	Water Resources (133 BS, 141 BA)
	Soil and Waste Res. (133 BS, 141 BA)
	Music, General (133)
	Physical Education (135)
	Music Education, Vocal (136)
	Music Education, Instrumental (137)
	Elementary Education (138)
	Physical Education (139)
	Paper Science (141 BS, 149 BA)
	Medical Technology (143 BS, 151 BA)
STO	Art Education (135)
	Manufacturing Engineering (137)
SUP	Social Work (131)
	Information Systems (131)
	Music/Ed. (132)
	Social Science/Ed. (136 BS, 147 BA)
	Science/Ed. (136 BS, 147 BA)
	Elementary Education (136 BS, 147 BA)

Note: Degree programs ending in "Ed." lead to teacher certification. The coursework needed for this certification accounts for most, and in most cases all, of the credit requirements above 120. These degree programs often have counterparts that do not lead to teacher certification that can be completed with fewer credits.

Source: Survey of UW Institutions, Summer 2001

Appendix B
University of Wisconsin System
Credit Distribution of Bachelors Degree Recipients in 1993-94
By Attempted Credits and Institution

	120 & Under	121-130	131-140	141-150	151-160	161-170	171-180	181-190	Over 190	Total
Eau Claire	4%	14%	26%	19%	15%	10%	5%	3%	4%	1,509
Green Bay	16%	22%	22%	14%	11%	7%	3%	2%	4%	576
La Crosse	1%	11%	21%	18%	17%	11%	8%	5%	7%	1,094
Madison	21%	25%	20%	14%	9%	5%	3%	2%	2%	4,541
Milwaukee	11%	18%	17%	15%	12%	9%	6%	4%	8%	1,931
Oshkosh	3%	12%	23%	18%	14%	10%	7%	5%	7%	1,313
Parkside	9%	18%	22%	16%	13%	9%	4%	4%	6%	337
Platteville	1%	7%	24%	21%	16%	13%	8%	4%	6%	722
River Falls	4%	12%	27%	17%	17%	7%	6%	4%	6%	550
Stevens Point	3%	16%	20%	19%	15%	10%	6%	3%	6%	1,242
Stout	3%	7%	22%	23%	17%	11%	6%	5%	6%	918
Superior	6%	11%	17%	20%	14%	11%	6%	5%	10%	171
Whitewater	9%	22%	24%	18%	11%	7%	4%	3%	4%	1,373
Overall	10%	17%	21%	17%	13%	8%	5%	3%	5%	16,277

Appendix C
University of Wisconsin System
Credit Distribution of Bachelors Degree Recipients in 2000-01
By Attempted Credits and Institution

	120 & Under	121-130	131-140	141-150	151-160	161-170	171-180	181-190	Over 190	Total
Eau Claire	14%	21%	20%	17%	10%	7%	4%	3%	3%	1,378
Green Bay	19%	27%	22%	13%	8%	4%	3%	2%	2%	649
La Crosse	12%	21%	18%	15%	13%	8%	6%	3%	3%	1,258
Madison	39%	24%	16%	10%	5%	3%	1%	1%	1%	5,061
Milwaukee	17%	19%	17%	13%	10%	7%	6%	3%	7%	1,848
Oshkosh	10%	20%	19%	14%	12%	8%	6%	5%	6%	1,137
Parkside	14%	26%	18%	13%	11%	6%	2%	3%	5%	364
Platteville	6%	17%	18%	22%	12%	10%	6%	4%	6%	688
River Falls	19%	26%	17%	16%	10%	4%	2%	2%	2%	732
Stevens Point	13%	23%	18%	18%	11%	6%	4%	2%	4%	1,199
Stout	7%	18%	25%	19%	15%	5%	4%	3%	4%	782
Superior	14%	20%	20%	15%	11%	8%	4%	3%	6%	142
Whitewater	12%	27%	18%	14%	11%	8%	5%	2%	3%	1,322
Overall	21%	23%	18%	14%	9%	6%	4%	2%	3%	16,560

Appendix D
University of Wisconsin System
Calendar and Semester Time-to-Degree Measures by Institution
For Bachelors Degree Recipients in 2000-01

		Years to Graduation				
		4	5	6	More than 6	Total
Eau Claire	Graduates	26%	51%	13%	10%	1,378
	Fall/Springs	7.9	9.5	11.1	13.2	9.7
	Summers	1.0	1.0	1.3	2.0	1.1
	Stop Outs	0.0	0.1	0.4	4.7	0.6
Green Bay	Graduates	26%	45%	12%	17%	649
	Fall/Springs	7.9	9.6	11.2	13.3	10.0
	Summers	0.8	0.9	1.1	1.4	1.0
	Stop Outs	0.1	0.1	0.4	9.8	1.8
La Crosse	Graduates	34%	46%	14%	6%	1,258
	Fall/Springs	7.9	9.6	11.2	12.7	9.4
	Summers	1.0	1.1	1.6	1.9	1.2
	Stop Outs	0.0	0.1	0.3	4.6	0.4
Madison	Graduates	47%	38%	8%	7%	5,061
	Fall/Springs	7.9	9.4	10.6	12.2	9.0
	Summers	0.9	1.1	1.6	2.1	1.1
	Stop Outs	0.1	0.1	0.9	8.1	0.7
Milwaukee	Graduates	21%	34%	16%	28%	1,848
	Fall/Springs	7.9	9.5	11.2	13.9	10.7
	Summers	1.3	1.5	1.8	2.3	1.7
	Stop Outs	0.0	0.1	0.5	7.4	2.2
Oshkosh	Graduates	24%	41%	18%	17%	1,137
	Fall/Springs	7.9	9.6	11.3	13.1	10.1
	Summers	0.5	0.6	1.0	1.2	0.7
	Stop Outs	0.0	0.1	0.3	6.3	1.2
Parkside	Graduates	25%	32%	12%	31%	364
	Fall/Springs	7.9	9.4	10.9	13.5	10.5
	Summers	1.1	1.3	1.7	2.2	1.6
	Stop Outs	0.0	0.1	0.6	7.3	2.4
Platteville	Graduates	22%	45%	20%	13%	688
	Fall/Springs	7.9	9.5	11.1	13.5	9.9
	Summers	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.7	1.3
	Stop Outs	0.0	0.1	0.3	5.3	0.8
River Falls	Graduates	39%	43%	7%	10%	732
	Fall/Springs	7.8	9.4	10.8	12.3	9.2
	Summers	0.8	1.0	1.1	2.4	1.1
	Stop Outs	0.0	0.1	0.6	8.9	1.0
Stevens Point	Graduates	25%	48%	14%	13%	1,199
	Fall/Springs	7.9	9.5	11.1	12.7	9.7
	Summers	0.7	0.9	1.2	1.8	1.0
	Stop Outs	0.0	0.1	0.5	9.0	1.3
Stout	Graduates	24%	49%	13%	14%	782
	Fall/Springs	7.8	9.5	10.9	12.1	9.6
	Summers	1.3	1.1	1.5	2.1	1.3
	Stop Outs	0.1	0.1	0.6	6.9	1.1

Appendix D (continued)

		Years to Graduation				
		4	5	6	More than 6	Total
Superior	Graduates	27%	37%	13%	23%	142
	Fall/Springs	7.8	9.6	11.4	12.0	9.9
	Summers	0.7	0.8	1.1	1.5	1.0
	Stop Outs	0.0	0.1	0.2	8.7	2.1
Whitewater	Graduates	30%	43%	15%	13%	1,322
	Fall/Springs	7.9	9.5	11.2	13.0	9.7
	Summers	0.9	1.0	1.3	1.6	1.1
	Stop Outs	0.0	0.1	0.3	7.6	1.1
UW System	Graduates	33%	42%	12%	13%	16,560
	Fall/Springs	7.9	9.5	11.0	13.1	9.6
	Summers	0.9	1.1	1.4	2.0	1.2
	Stop Outs	0.1	0.1	0.5	7.4	1.1

Appendix E
University of Wisconsin System
Six-Year Graduation Rates by Institution
For New Freshmen

	1981 Cohort		1985 Cohort		1989 Cohort		1993 Cohort		1995 Cohort	
	Where Started	At Any UW	Where Started	At Any UW	Where Started	At Any UW	Where Started	At Any UW	Where Started	At Any UW
Eau Claire	46.0%	57.6%	46.9%	56.5%	57.3%	64.9%	51.7%	61.2%	54.5%	63.1%
Green Bay	31.8%	41.5%	35.4%	43.4%	40.3%	48.7%	47.3%	58.0%	42.5%	54.9%
La Crosse	40.3%	50.7%	40.7%	49.1%	46.2%	56.1%	48.7%	58.9%	52.5%	62.6%
Madison	64.5%	68.6%	67.0%	71.5%	72.3%	74.6%	74.3%	76.9%	75.8%	78.3%
Milwaukee	31.2%	36.7%	34.8%	41.1%	39.9%	46.2%	33.2%	38.2%	38.8%	42.9%
Oshkosh	38.8%	45.8%	43.4%	48.2%	47.2%	54.0%	46.8%	54.0%	45.4%	53.9%
Parkside	20.5%	30.6%	23.9%	34.3%	31.8%	41.8%	27.3%	37.4%	25.1%	35.8%
Platteville	46.6%	54.7%	44.9%	51.0%	54.5%	60.5%	53.2%	62.7%	50.3%	56.3%
River Falls	32.6%	35.5%	36.8%	40.0%	41.1%	44.9%	48.6%	51.9%	47.8%	51.8%
Stevens Point	41.6%	49.0%	40.7%	47.6%	52.1%	59.0%	52.8%	60.9%	53.5%	62.6%
Stout	45.2%	49.0%	45.0%	49.5%	51.0%	55.9%	49.6%	54.8%	39.3%	44.5%
Superior	27.4%	32.9%	30.4%	33.8%	30.4%	34.2%	34.0%	38.6%	32.6%	37.5%
Whitewater	45.5%	54.0%	47.6%	53.0%	55.7%	62.0%	47.2%	54.7%	51.4%	58.2%
Overall	44.4%	51.4%	47.5%	53.6%	54.1%	59.9%	53.0%	59.5%	54.2%	60.5%

Appendix F
University of Wisconsin System
Four-Year Graduation Rates by Institution
For New Freshmen

	1981 Cohort		1985 Cohort		1989 Cohort		1993 Cohort		1995 Cohort		1997 Cohort	
	Where Started	At Any UW	Where Started	At Any UW	Where Started	At Any UW	Where Started	At Any UW	Where Started	At Any UW	Where Started	At Any UW
Eau Claire	20.8%	23.9%	14.2%	16.0%	13.0%	13.9%	13.3%	15.2%	16.4%	17.9%	15.8%	17.7%
Green Bay	14.3%	16.1%	11.8%	14.4%	11.4%	12.2%	13.6%	16.2%	12.5%	15.0%	15.6%	17.8%
La Crosse	13.7%	16.1%	8.8%	9.9%	8.7%	9.9%	14.3%	15.9%	18.7%	20.9%	22.7%	24.9%
Madison	25.5%	26.3%	28.7%	29.5%	32.2%	32.4%	36.7%	37.0%	39.9%	40.5%	39.5%	40.0%
Milwaukee	10.0%	10.8%	10.6%	11.6%	11.8%	12.8%	6.7%	7.5%	10.4%	11.2%	14.3%	15.2%
Oshkosh	14.7%	16.1%	11.8%	12.8%	9.2%	10.0%	13.6%	15.0%	14.1%	16.1%	14.1%	15.9%
Parkside	8.7%	10.7%	7.5%	9.2%	7.8%	8.4%	7.4%	8.9%	6.5%	7.5%	12.0%	12.8%
Platteville	20.1%	21.5%	13.2%	14.5%	13.2%	13.8%	11.8%	13.3%	13.6%	14.0%	14.1%	15.5%
River Falls	11.3%	12.0%	11.1%	11.7%	9.1%	10.1%	19.4%	19.8%	21.3%	22.1%	23.5%	24.7%
Stevens Point	13.1%	14.6%	9.5%	10.9%	11.6%	13.4%	14.7%	16.1%	19.3%	22.0%	17.1%	18.6%
Stout	17.9%	18.9%	11.5%	12.0%	9.9%	10.0%	14.0%	14.4%	13.0%	13.7%	13.7%	14.3%
Superior	12.4%	13.2%	12.4%	12.7%	7.5%	7.8%	12.6%	13.0%	17.3%	18.7%	11.0%	11.3%
Whitewater	20.3%	22.0%	14.3%	15.2%	13.9%	15.1%	13.7%	15.0%	15.7%	17.2%	16.4%	17.8%
Overall	17.4%	18.9%	15.7%	16.8%	16.3%	17.0%	18.7%	19.7%	21.4%	22.7%	22.4%	23.5%

Appendix G
University of Wisconsin System
Proportion of Six-Year Graduates by Year of Graduation
For New Freshmen who Graduated at Any UW Institution

	4-year		5-year		6-year		Total	
	1989	1995	1989	1995	1989	1995	1989	1995
Eau Claire	21.5%	28.4%	62.2%	57.1%	16.3%	14.5%	100%	100%
Green Bay	25.1%	27.3%	53.4%	58.2%	21.5%	14.5%	100%	100%
La Crosse	17.8%	33.4%	59.1%	53.5%	23.1%	13.1%	100%	100%
Madison	43.4%	51.7%	45.2%	40.3%	11.4%	8.0%	100%	100%
Milwaukee	27.8%	26.1%	47.5%	49.5%	24.7%	24.3%	100%	100%
Oshkosh	18.7%	30.0%	55.8%	52.1%	25.5%	18.0%	100%	100%
Parkside	20.3%	21.0%	52.0%	52.4%	27.7%	26.6%	100%	100%
Platteville	22.8%	25.0%	54.7%	50.7%	22.5%	24.4%	100%	100%
River Falls	22.6%	42.7%	57.1%	46.8%	20.3%	10.5%	100%	100%
Stevens Point	22.9%	35.2%	58.7%	51.1%	18.5%	13.7%	100%	100%
Stout	17.9%	31.0%	60.6%	54.2%	21.5%	14.9%	100%	100%
Superior	22.8%	50.0%	54.4%	36.1%	22.8%	13.9%	100%	100%
Whitewater	24.4%	29.3%	60.0%	54.2%	15.6%	16.5%	100%	100%
Overall	28.5%	37.6%	53.7%	48.7%	17.8%	13.7%	100%	100%

Appendix H
University of Wisconsin System
Second-Year Retention Rates by Institution
For New Freshmen

	1981 Cohort		1985 Cohort		1989 Cohort		1995 Cohort		1998 Cohort		2000 Cohort	
	Where Started	At Any UW	Where Started	At Any UW	Where Started	At Any UW	Where Started	At Any UW	Where Started	At Any UW	Where Started	At Any UW
Eau Claire	70.8%	79.4%	73.1%	80.6%	81.2%	85.9%	77.1%	83.1%	79.2%	86.6%	78.3%	86.1%
Green Bay	62.8%	70.3%	65.6%	72.0%	77.2%	82.6%	73.0%	81.1%	69.0%	80.6%	74.1%	83.9%
La Crosse	66.5%	75.3%	71.4%	79.3%	74.4%	80.8%	79.0%	86.3%	81.7%	87.9%	83.9%	91.4%
Madison	84.9%	88.5%	86.2%	89.4%	89.6%	91.1%	91.7%	93.4%	91.4%	93.5%	90.9%	93.1%
Milwaukee	69.9%	75.4%	72.5%	78.4%	77.1%	81.9%	70.7%	75.4%	69.9%	74.6%	73.9%	80.1%
Oshkosh	69.2%	76.5%	71.0%	76.3%	78.5%	84.0%	71.2%	79.6%	73.5%	81.9%	72.1%	79.5%
Parkside	59.4%	66.2%	61.5%	67.8%	75.0%	81.8%	64.3%	73.3%	61.3%	68.9%	60.7%	68.1%
Platteville	70.7%	77.6%	69.0%	76.6%	76.5%	81.8%	72.5%	79.9%	78.7%	82.6%	74.9%	82.3%
River Falls	63.8%	67.6%	64.8%	68.2%	70.7%	73.3%	66.4%	71.3%	77.1%	81.7%	73.0%	78.9%
Stevens Point	66.4%	74.8%	67.6%	74.9%	75.4%	80.2%	72.7%	80.0%	76.0%	81.3%	76.2%	83.2%
Stout	67.8%	74.2%	67.6%	73.2%	73.9%	78.4%	69.4%	75.4%	73.5%	78.0%	74.9%	80.3%
Superior	56.4%	61.1%	58.0%	63.3%	56.9%	60.7%	62.5%	65.2%	60.3%	64.3%	64.5%	66.8%
Whitewater	71.8%	79.8%	70.9%	78.2%	77.6%	84.0%	75.9%	82.9%	75.6%	83.1%	74.2%	81.8%
Overall	71.3%	77.8%	73.6%	79.4%	79.4%	83.7%	77.6%	83.0%	78.5%	84.0%	78.8%	84.6%

Appendix I
University of Wisconsin System
Six-Year Graduation Rates and Second-Year Retention Rates
At Institution Where Started
For New Freshmen

	Six-Year Graduation Rates				
	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
UW System	51.7%	52.7%	53.0%	53.3%	54.3%
National	47.6%	47.6%	47.9%		

	Second-Year Retention Rates				
	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
UW System	78.2%	78.5%	78.5%	78.6%	78.8%
National	71.2%	71.9%	72.0%	72.0%	

TECHNICAL NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, bachelors degree recipients includes first-time degree recipients who started as new freshmen in the UW System.
2. Credits-to-degree measurements include the credits associated with all GPR-funded courses that the student was attempting as of the 10th day of the semester.
3. UW System credit averages are weighted averages of institutional credits.
4. Retention and graduation rates are based on new freshmen who were full-time students their first semester of enrollment.
5. In response to the federal Student-Right-to-Know (SRTK) legislation definitional and reporting requirements, the entering new freshman cohort includes only those students who took a full credit load during their first fall semester. The rationale for using only full-time is that these students have the opportunity to complete their degree programs within 150 percent of time required for a standard four-year program. The "150 percent of standard time" equates to a six-year degree completion rate defined by Congress for SRTK purposes. The NCAA and most other higher education and media enterprises use both the full-time credit load and six-year rate as the standards for institutional comparison. One other measurement unique to Wisconsin is whether students are retained at or graduate from the same institution they started at or from a different UW institution. For external reporting purposes, the former measure is necessary for compliance with reporting requirements and to enable comparisons between institutions. For internal purposes, both measures are considered; however, the latter is most useful in evaluating the performance of the system as a whole.

OCCASIONAL RESEARCH BRIEFS / INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDA

Vol. 02, No. 1, May 2002	Institutional Efficiency and Student Success: The Relationship Between Credits-to-Degree, Time-to-Degree and Graduation Rates
Informational Memorandum	Trends in Enrollment: Fall 2001 Update
Vol. 01, No. 1, June 2001	Access to the UW System: Service Rates by Family Income
Informational Memorandum	Student Financial Aid: 2000-01
Informational Memorandum	Degrees Conferred: 2000-01 Update
Informational Memorandum	Trends in Enrollment: Fall 2000 Update
Informational Memorandum	The New Freshman Class: Fall 2000
Informational Memorandum	Degrees Conferred: 1999-00 Update
Informational Memorandum	Student Financial Aid: 1999-00 Update
Vol. 00, No. 1, June 2000	New Freshmen Outcomes: Retention and Graduation
Vol. 00, No. 2, August 2000	Access in the UW System
Informational Memorandum	Trends in Enrollment: Fall 1999 Update
Informational Memorandum	The New Freshman Class: Fall 1999
Informational Memorandum	Student Financial Aid: 1998-99 Update
Informational Memorandum	Degrees Conferred: 1998-99 Update
Vol. 99, No. 1: April 1999	The Graying of the Faculty in the UW System
Informational Memorandum	The New Freshman Class: Fall 1998
Informational Memorandum	Student Financial Aid: 1997-98 Update
Informational Memorandum	Trends in Enrollment: Fall 1998 Update
Vol. 98, No. 1: February 1998	Student Financial Aid in the UW System: 1996-97 Update
Vol. 98, No. 2: February 1998	Trends in Degrees Conferred: 1996-97 Update
Vol. 98, No. 3: May 1998	Transfer Students
Informational Memorandum	Trends in Enrollment: Fall 1997 Update
Vol. 97, No. 1: March 1997	Access Update: The Class Of Fall 1996
Vol. 96, No. 1: May 1996	New Freshman Outcomes: Retention and Graduation
Vol. 96, No. 2: September 1996	1994-95 Faculty Age Distributions In The UW System
Vol. 95, No. 1: February 1995	Trends In Enrollment: Fall 1994.
Vol. 95, No. 2: March 1995	Trends In Degrees Conferred: 1993-94 Update.
Vol. 95, No. 3: March 1995	Student Financial Aid Update: 1993-94.
Vol. 95, No. 4: May 1995	Access Update: The Class Of Fall 1994
Vol. 95, No. 5. May 1995	New Undergraduate Class: Fall 1994
Vol. 95, No. 6. December 1995	New Freshman Outcomes: Retention and Graduation
Vol. 94, No. 1: February 1994	Trends In Degrees Conferred, 1982-83 To 1992-93.
Vol. 94, No. 2: February 1994	Trends In Enrollment: Fall 1993 Update.
Vol. 94, No. 3: April 1994	Student Financial Aid In The UW System, 1992-93 Update.
Vol. 94, No. 4: April 1994	Meeting The Financial Aid Needs Of UW Resident Undergraduates.
Vol. 94, No. 5: May 1994	Access Update: The Class Of Fall 1993.
Vol. 94, No. 6: May 1994	The New Undergraduate Class: Fall 1993.
Vol. 93, No. 1: February 1993	Trends In Enrollment: Fall 1992 Update.
Vol. 93, No. 2: March 1993	APPENDIX Access Update: The Class of Fall 1992 Freshman Admission Requirements at the University of Wisconsin.
Vol. 93, No. 2: March 1993	Access Update: The Class Of Fall 1992.
Vol. 93, No. 3: March 1993	The New Undergraduate Class: Fall 1992.
Vol. 93, No. 4: March 1993	New Freshman Outcomes: Retention, Graduation And Time To Degree.
Vol. 93, No. 5: March 1993	Trends In Degrees Conferred, 1981-82 To 1991-92.
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Vol. 91, No. 3: May 1991	Characteristics Of New Freshmen.
Vol. 91, No. 4: May 1991	Annual Status Report On Student Financial Aid In The UW System, 1989-90.
Vol. 91, No. 5: August 1991	Trends In Enrollment.

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